

Support Fund for the reception and integration of immigrants and their educational support

Ministry of Social Welfare
Ministry for Refugee, Immigration
and Integration Affairs

Introduction

As one of the Peer Review countries in this Peer Review meeting in El Escorial the 20th and 21st October 2008 the representatives from Denmark are pleased to make our comments on the host country paper and the discussion paper. Denmark finds the theme highly relevant seen from both a national and a European perspective, and would like to thank the Commission, ÖSB and our Spanish hosts for the invitation. We hope that our paper will contribute to a fruitful discussion.

In the following we are going to discuss the Spanish Immigration, Integration and Reception Fund and relate it to the latest challenges and initiatives in integration policies in Denmark. We will mainly focus on its relevance seen from our national perspective and outline the most important Danish integration initiatives and strategies – initiatives and strategies that are first and foremost outlined in the Danish National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010.

1. An assessment of the relevance of the policy to Denmark

Firstly, it must be underlined that there are some differences between Spain and Denmark with respect to the central, regional and local government structures. In Denmark, the 98 municipalities are the implementing bodies of the integration policy whereas the state sets the legal and institutional framework for the integration policies. In addition certain initiatives and projects are initiated or supported directly by the state.

1.1 The coordination of immigration policy and the management of immigration – the state and the local level

The Danish integration policy and its implementation is a shared responsibility between several authorities – among others the Ministry for Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, the Ministry for Employment, the Ministry for Education and the Ministry for Social Affairs. The municipalities are responsible for implementing introduction programmes and other integration initiatives.

The government has formulated the goals for the integration policy in a series of Government Action Plans on integration which also includes specific initiatives to be implemented. The integration policy is also part of the general government platform which constitutes the base for government work. Furthermore integration may also be part of other policy areas – e.g. the current efforts to increase the labour force. The concrete coordination of implementation etc.

takes place between ministries relevant to the concrete initiatives. This may be in the form of working groups on specific topics involving relevant authorities.

In general there is close contact and cooperation between the ministries, the municipalities and their association – Local Government Denmark (LGDK) – as well as the different labour market organisations.

In the Ministry for Integration there are several out-going task-forces with purpose of among others counselling and advising local implementing partners and associations like the municipalities, local schools and other educational institutions, labour market associations, private companies and NGO's. This is e.g. the task force Integration Service advising the municipalities, the campaign "We need all youngsters" advising on educational possibilities and a newly established task-force (under the Division for Cohesion and Prevention of Radicalisation) to prevent radicalisation - especially among young people."

The Danish Integration Act was introduced in 1999. The main purpose of the act is to ensure that newly-arrived refugees and immigrants can make the most of their capacities on an equal footing with other citizens of Denmark. All refugees and immigrants are offered a three year introduction course by the municipality in which they are settled according to the general allocation scheme administrated by the Danish Immigration Service. The course includes free teaching of Danish language and knowledge of Danish society, employment-promoting options skills assessment, vocational training and education and the elaboration of an individually tailored integration contract between the refugee or immigrant and the municipality. These activities are implemented by the municipal authorities in close cooperation with work places and educational institutions. The municipalities and other implementing actors may obtain advice and guidance on how to organise the integration activities from the Ministry of Integration.

2. Similarities and differences of the policy in Denmark

A significant difference between Spain and Denmark is that Denmark does not have a similar High Council for Immigration Policy that consists of a collegiate cooperation and coordination body in which the General State Administration, the regions, and local governments are represented and that analyses objective criteria for the allocation of a Support Fund based on a Cooperation Framework. Consequently, the question concerning the potential transferability of the Spanish solution as described in the received material is not of immediate relevance seen from a Danish perspective.

4. Challenges and initiatives in the integration area in Denmark

4.1 The overall challenge

An overall challenge related to integration is to preserve and develop an open and cohesive society with freedoms, obligations and opportunities for all citizens.

Danish policy does not adhere to uncritical multiculturalism that may allow for parallel societies to develop.

The policy does not adhere to full cultural assimilation of new citizens. Freedom to practice any religion or to dress or eat in a certain way is natural in a democratic society. Indeed the freedom and integrity of the individual is an essential democratic value. Thus, racism, sexism and discrimination on the grounds of colour, creed, gender, sexuality or the like are unacceptable.

All citizens – with their different beliefs, traditions and mind sets - have a mutual responsibility to respect basic democratic values, thus allowing a positive co-existence. In addition a number of less formal, yet important, norms regulate interpersonal behaviour in our work places, schools, day care institutions and many other places. Also in these types of settings there is a challenge to ensure that certain common norms are adhered to, while at the same time respecting such differences that are natural in a democratic society.

4.2 Major challenges

Refugees as part of Danish society

A special challenge in refugee policy is that newly arrived refugees who come from a culture with other norms, values and traditions must as quickly as possible become citizens that participate in and contribute to society on an equal footing with its other citizens. Newly arrived refugees must consequently become self-supporting as quickly as possible through employment and acquire an understanding of the basic values and norms of Danish society.

Children and young people must be better integrated

Many children and young people with immigrant backgrounds are experiencing problems finding their place in Danish society. A large number of bilingual children and young people with immigrant backgrounds and their families are not sufficiently integrated in the schools and thus in Danish society.

Extremism and radicalisation are other expressions of the challenges Denmark faces in relation to protecting cohesion and a society with freedom, opportunities and safety for all. In recent years, Denmark has seen worrying trends that certain groups of young people are being influenced by extremist views and radicalisation.

The risk that extremist forces may become hostile against society or specific groups in society must be prevented and countered. Society must be prepared to identify and handle specific problems with extremism in time, and the extremists' propaganda must be countered with factual information and alternative services to young people.

Gender equality

Generally, giving immigrant women special attention in the integration efforts is important. Each woman must have the possibility of discovering, using and developing her own resources and thus of attaining a better basis for using the opportunities in Danish society. This will not only benefit the individual woman herself, but also her family as a whole, as women are often the key to the integration of the entire family.

More men and more women must get into employment

A key aspect of the integration efforts is to help citizens with immigrant backgrounds and their descendants to get work, and, as mentioned earlier in this report, the employment initiatives aimed at these groups have borne fruit in recent years. However, these groups' employment rate is far below the total employment rate, and consequently citizens with immigrant backgrounds – both women and men – still need to be helped into employment. These efforts are also furthered because enterprises are becoming better at exploiting the opportunities inherent in employing these citizens and managing diverse employee groups who can and will perform the tasks pending.

4.3 Initiatives

Newly arrived refugees

Local authorities offer refugees, as well as other foreigners covered by the Integration Act, an introduction programme of up to three years' duration, covering Danish language courses, including courses in Danish culture and society, and – where relevant – active employment-related services. With a view to the foreigner's obtaining ordinary employment as soon as possible, the local council must work with the individual to prepare an integration contract based on an overall assessment of the individual foreigner's situation and needs.

Traumatised refugees

To improve efforts aimed at traumatised refugees, the Government has launched three major projects with local partners and with part projects in various Danish towns. The purpose is to further develop and extend knowledge of methods that create coherence in efforts aimed at traumatised refugees and their families and thus give them better opportunities for participating in work and education and becoming citizens in Danish society. The projects are intended to create a basis for targeted, inter-disciplinary coordination for traumatised refugees in each local authority. The projects are also meant to help strengthen cooperation between language centres all over Denmark and the local partners in job centres, among therapists and in enterprises. To this should be added the further development of the so-called "psycho-education" method with special emphasis on the entire family.

Marginalised children and young people

In January 2008, an inter-ministerial working group whose ongoing task is to analyse problems in the integration area and submit proposals to the Government on new initiatives related to employment, education, disadvantaged housing estates and social integration. The working group will also describe the present efforts to counter marginalisation among these children and young people as well as make recommendations for new government initiatives and a catalogue of ideas for successful initiatives and projects to be used by authorities, institutions, associations and housing organisations.

Integration of children and young people in the education system

To support the learning development of children and young people with immigrant backgrounds, the Government has launched several initiatives aimed at creating better conditions for teaching in schools with many bilingual pupils. The purpose of the material is to identify bilingual children's need for language stimulation and support in Danish as a second language.

The local authorities must offer mandatory language stimulation to bilingual pre-school children if, following an expert assessment, they need such stimulation. The language stimulation covers children from age three to school age. Bilingual school-age pupils must also receive instruction in Danish as a second language if they do not have sufficient knowledge of Danish. Local authorities may refer pupils to another school than the district school if on admittance the pupil is assessed to have a significant need for language support, and the referral is assessed to be required for pedagogic reasons.

In the period from 2008 to 2011, the Ministry of Integration and the Ministry of Education will establish an out-reach advisory unit in primary and lower secondary school (Bilingual Task Force), which is to help ensure that pupils with immigrant backgrounds leave primary and lower secondary school with educational standards sufficient for them to complete a youth education programme. The Bilingual Task Force will be a service for schools with a relatively high share of bilingual pupils.

The Ministry of Integration has also launched a campaign, *We need all youngsters*, aimed at prompting more young people with immigrant backgrounds to start and complete qualifying vocational training. To strengthen these young people's motivation and learning, the campaign includes role models among the young people themselves and among their parents. Furthermore, the campaign stresses the importance of establishing and operating homework help schemes and of retaining the young people in the vocational training programmes.

Anti-discrimination and prevention of extremism and radicalisation

Two legislative packages on combating terror have already been implemented, which improved police investigation possibilities and civil preparedness as well as tightened penal and deportation rules. The Government has also implemented legislation making it an aggravating circumstance if a crime is committed on the basis of the victim's ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, legal statements or the like.

Likewise, a wide array of preventively oriented initiatives has been launched, aimed at reinforcing democratic values and promoting equal opportunities, mutual responsibility and open dialogue. This has helped bolster society's and the individual's resistance to extremism. The Government continues, also at international level, the efforts to prevent extremism, realising that extremism is a cross-border problem and that circumstances in other countries influence what happens in Denmark and vice-versa. The strategy involves partnership initiatives and greater diplomatic presence in some of the world's hotspots, including the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, a number of Danish local authorities, institutions, organisations, immigrant associations, etc., make various independent efforts to prevent and counter extremist views among young people.

The Government aims to design an overall strategy for preventing extremist views and radicalisation among young people and to this end, in January 2008, set up a working group of

government officials, who have prepared the report *A common and safe future – Proposal for an action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people*.

The report includes an analysis of the challenges faced by society as regards extremism and radicalisation among young people, as well as 41 specific proposed initiatives. Several of the initiatives also appear from the Government Platform *Society of Opportunities*. Examples include the strengthening of the cooperation between schools, the social services and the police to make them better equipped for early, coordinated intervention, as well as the strengthening of democracy and citizen education – including in primary and lower secondary school, in Danish courses for adult foreigners and for religious preachers. Other examples are the use of role models, increased dialogue on Denmark's commitment in the Middle East and in other places around the world as well as the relations between the West and the Muslim world. To the above should be added the establishment of a democratic platform for young people with multi-cultural backgrounds and the set-up of a website with debate on democracy and radicalisation.

Honour-related conflicts

Shelters have been established for women who are victims of honour-related violence and for girls who experience severe generation conflicts with their parents. Moreover, a central corps of mediators to help families resolve their conflicts will be established for these young people. Other activities include the set-up of hotlines for young people, parents and professionals, respectively, information material, attitude adjustment campaigns and aftercare for girls.

Special actions for women with immigrant backgrounds and their families

A programme called the *Women's Programme* has been launched, the general purpose of which is to help more women with immigrant backgrounds become active fellow citizens in Danish society. The Government has allocated a total of DKK 55.6m from the rate adjustment pool funds to the programme for the period 2007-2011. The programme comprises 11 specific initiatives to strengthen women's chances of finding work, getting an education and participating in sports and association life. Moreover, the initiatives aim at enhancing women's possibilities of fostering their children's integration and development in the broad sense.

A common feature of the initiatives is how they build on the women's existing resources and in various ways they help women to gain the best basis for enhancing their own and their children's development and integration.

The programme's 11 initiatives will be implemented through a few major projects, which will receive grants from the Ministry of Integration and are solidly embedded in, for example, a local authority, a nationwide association or a housing organisation.

More citizens with immigrant backgrounds in employment

The Ministry of Integration is implementing the diversity programme *A workplace for new Danes* in the period 2006-2011. The programme will compile, develop and disseminate enterprises' positive experience with diversity management, the aim being to help persons with immigrant backgrounds gain employment and integrate those already in employment.

So far, the diversity programme supports 15 specific projects, the first of which were launched in 2007. The projects have held about 100 workshops and dialogue meetings and visited 1,000 enterprises to inform them about diversity.

A survey on religion in the Danish labour market has been carried out, and three general publications on diversity are in print. A wide array of experience has been gained, including on enterprises' recruitment and employment of citizens with immigrant backgrounds, the use of mentors and religion in the labour market. In 2008, the emphasis has been on workplace culture – including informing citizens with immigrant backgrounds about Danish workplace culture and breaking down labour market barriers. Retaining employees with immigrant backgrounds, upgrading their skills and developing their management potential have also been in focus.

Furthermore, ethnic consultants in 13 job centres receive support. The consultants are tasked with helping to get citizens with immigrant backgrounds attached to the labour market and ensuring continuous development, documentation and dissemination of experience with the target group.

On 1 January 2007, a nationwide special function for ethnic employment efforts opened. The special function is tasked with advising and guiding all Danish job centres on how to integrate and keep citizens with immigrant backgrounds in the labour market. The special function is to ensure that all employees in the job centres know the legislation on discrimination.

5. An assessment on monitoring and evaluation of policies in Denmark

5.1 The need for a culture of evaluation – how to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency from integration activities

A main objective for the Danish government is to measure the effect of the integration activities both in a short and long term perspective. The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs supervises the integration process by preparing a wide range of analysis, evaluations and benchmarks. As an example the Ministry has initiated an annual analysis of the effects of the three-year introductory programme for refugees and immigrants.

And each year benchmarking of the integration efforts are carried out in a large number of municipalities, enabling the authorities to discover how fast newcomers obtain ordinary employment. Benchmarking has encouraged the municipalities to evaluate their efforts and focus on future integration challenges.

In addition, benchmarking has stimulated the municipalities to share experiences in the integration field. Furthermore every 4-5 years the ministry prepares an overall evaluation on the implementation of the Integration Act in the municipalities.

Every year the Government allocates substantial funds for projects organised by local authorities and organisations in civil society to strengthen local integration projects. The Danish Government has increased focus also on evaluation and benchmarking of projects supported by public funding.

Gathering, exchanging and disseminating examples of best practice is also an important part of improving the quality and efficiency of integration activities and projects.

6. Key issues and main questions for the debate

We find the six policy areas (access to the labour market, family regrouping, long term residence, political participation, access to nationality and anti-discrimination) in The INDEX Integration Policy Index good and relevant.

However, we think that gender equality as mentioned in the Spanish Social Barometer also is highly relevant. The role of immigrant women in social life, education and their access and participation in the labour market is a key issue in ensuring social inclusion - What is your opinion on that?

In Denmark we have adopted the German initiative called project "Bydelsmødre" – Neighbourhood Mothers or in German "Stadtteilmütter". It has not yet been evaluated. Perhaps Germany could comment more on their experience with this initiative?

United Kingdom and lately Spain have introduced citizenship in their school curriculum. In Denmark, this is also going to be introduced in the future - how is your perspective concerning citizenship education?

In the host country paper (page 5), it is mentioned that the Fund in 2005 allocated two major portions to finance reception and integration policies and integration actions and to bolster education. What are the pluri-regional activities mentioned here?

In the discussion paper (page 10-11) The Spanish Reception Fund is characterised as an intermediate model between a French melting pot (civic) integration model and a multicultural model as in United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Could you elaborate on what is meant by this?